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## II.—TYDOREL AND SIR GOWTHER.

Attention has often been called to the extraordinary parallelism which exists between *Sir Gowther*, a fifteenth century English version of *Robert the Devil*, and the so-called Breton Lay of *Tydorel*.<sup>1</sup> The latter is one of five anonymous romances published by Gaston Paris<sup>2</sup> according to the manuscript in the National Library, which includes also the lays of Marie de France.<sup>3</sup>

A cursory examination of these anonymous lays, all of which claim a Breton origin, shows them to be strikingly deficient in originality of conception and unity of structure. Not only in the above-mentioned collection, but in all the others that have appeared, the plagiarisms from the works of Marie de France can scarcely escape even the superficial reader. The lay of *Graelent*, for example, published by Crapelet,<sup>4</sup> in which some scholars have seen a primitive form of Celtic legend, is found upon examination to be a mere *pastiche*, an awkward combination of the plots of three of Marie's Lays—*Eliduc*, *Lanval*, and *Guingamor*.<sup>5</sup>

But in *Tydorel* we have, it would appear, a theme, or several themes, not directly traceable to Marie, but bearing a decided resemblance to the Christian legend of *Robert the*

<sup>1</sup> Kittredge's *Sir Orfeo*, *American Journal of Philology*, VII, pp. 178-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Lais Inédits*, *Romania*, VIII, pp. 32-74.

<sup>3</sup> Three of the Lays are missing in this ms.: *Laustic*, *Chaitivel* and *Eliduc*.

<sup>4</sup> *Poètes Français depuis le XII<sup>ème</sup> Siècle jusqu'à nos Jours*, Paris, 1824.

<sup>5</sup> For the complete demonstration of this theory, I will refer to an article by Prof. Lucien Foulet of Bryn Mawr College, soon to appear.

The whole framework of the story is borrowed from *Lanval*, while the Queen's love for Graelent, her consultation with the Seneschal, and her interview with the hero, reproduce a similar scene in *Eliduc*. The fairy mistress belonged originally to *Guingamor* (now attributed to Marie).

*Devil.* The analysis of these elements in *Tydorel*, and an investigation of their sources, are the main objects of this study, which, however, includes necessarily a somewhat detailed comparison of the latter with *Sir Gowther*.

The points of contact between *Sir Gowther* and *Tydorel* are too numerous to be the result of chance. That they may be evident to the reader at a glance, I have arranged the parallel episodes in corresponding sections below.

*Tydorel.*

1) The King and Queen of Britany, after ten years of happy married life, find themselves still without an heir.

2) The queen, while sitting in her garden, is approached by a handsome stranger, who requests her love, threatening at the same time that, if she reject him, she will never more know joy. He declines to reveal his name or lineage, but, catching the queen up before him on his steed, he rides away with her to the shores of a neighboring lake, and, leaving her there, plunges beneath the waters and disappears. On his reappearance, he tells her that his home is beneath the forest, and that he comes and goes through the waters of the lake. He then forbids her to question him further.

The queen, captivated by his mysterious charm, yields to his request, and, at parting, the stranger foretells the birth of their son, Tydorel, who shall be endowed with all gifts of nature and fortune, but who shall be marked by one strange characteristic—he shall never sleep.

The love of the Queen and the stranger shall endure many years, etc.

*Sir Gowther.*

1) The Duke and Duchess of Austria live happily together until finally, the duke, despairing of an heir, threatens to divorce the childless wife.

2) The duchess, in despair, prays Heaven to send her a child, she cares not whence it may come.

Soon afterwards she is approached, while sitting in her orchard, by a stranger disguised as her husband, who demands her love.

At parting, however, he reveals himself as the arch-fiend in person, and prophesies the birth of their son and his unruly character. Having uttered this prophecy, the stranger departs, and is seen no more.

3) The King knows nothing of this episode, and welcomes the advent of Tydorel with delight.

From the beginning, the child is marked by extraordinary beauty and strength.

He grows to manhood, beloved by his friends, feared by his foes, and, in due time, succeeds to the throne of his supposed father. His sleepless nights are spent in hearing tales of adventure.

4) On one occasion the king sends for a young man of the people, a goldsmith by trade, to beguile his sleeplessness by the telling of stories.

The young man declares that he knows no tales to tell; but when threatened by the king, retorts that one thing at least he does know—that the man who does not sleep is not of mortal birth.

5) Stung by this speech, Tydorel begins to reflect, and finally, overwhelmed with suspicion and foreboding, he rushes to his mother's chamber, and with a threatening countenance and drawn sword, forces her to reveal the secret of his birth.

She repeats the knight's prophecy, and gives the history of their relations from beginning to end.

6) Tydorel, on learning of his supernatural birth, immediately orders his horse, and, without explanation or farewell, rides away to the shore of the lake. There, still mounted on his steed, he plunges beneath the waters and is seen no more.

3) The duke, knowing nothing of these events, welcomes the child as his own, and surrounds him with every attention. Gowther from his birth is of wonderful strength and precocity, but violent and cruel beyond the measure of humanity. His rule is a reign of terror and vice.

4) As Sir Gowther grows older, his wickedness increases apace. Finally an old earl, outraged by his deeds of sacrilege and rapine, dares to inform him that his subjects are convinced that one so fiendish and inhuman cannot have been begotten by a mortal father.

5) This accusation brings the young man to reflexion, followed by remorse and despair. He goes at once to his mother's chamber, awakens her, and, with great violence, demands to know his father's name. The duchess, with shame, reveals all, and mother and son weep tears of grief and repentance.

6) Gowther then recommends his mother to a life of penance, and himself sets out without delay to seek counsel and pardon from the Pope at Rome.

Part second gives the story of his long and bitter expiation, of his final forgiveness, his marriage with the Emperor's daughter, and accession to the throne of the empire.

To sum up: The points of contact between *Tydorel* and *Sir Gowther* are the following:—

1) The long and happy union of the married pair. The desire for an heir is implied in *Tydorel*, emphasized in *Sir Gowther*.

2) In both, the father is a supernatural being, who appears to the wife in her orchard and who, at parting, prophesies the extraordinary character of the son to be born of their union.

3) In both, the husband is unaware of the stranger's visit, and welcomes the child as his own.

4) The child is of uncommon mental and physical vigor in both stories, and is distinguished from other children by some marked characteristic. He succeeds to the throne of the realm.

5) The hero is made aware of his supernatural origin by a remark, thrown out almost at random, by a person necessarily ignorant of the real state of affairs.

6) Tydorel and Sir Gowther both force an avowal from their mother, by threats of violence, and both proceed to act immediately upon the information which they receive from her concerning their origin.

The legend of *Robert the Devil* has been studied in great detail, and with most interesting results, by Karl Breul.<sup>1</sup> He gives us a careful edition of *Sir Gowther*, a late offshoot of the old saga, but in his long and exhaustive discussion of the sources and the various versions of the Robert legend, *Sir Gowther* has been dismissed with a summary and, perhaps, inadequate treatment. The legend, according to Breul, has no historical foundation, but, traced to its ultimate source, is found to be a clerical redaction of two old folk-lore themes, the first of which has been generalized under the name of the

<sup>1</sup> *Sir Gowther, Eine Englische Romanze aus dem XVten Jahrhundert*, von Karl Breul, Oppeln, 1886.

*Kinder-Wunsch* motive, while the second (and by far the more important element) is the motive of the male Cinderella, or, in other words, the story of the prince who lives for long years at the Emperor's court, disguised as a beggar or scullion, who in time of war, rescues the empire from its enemies (still in disguise), but who finally reveals his true rank, and receives the hand of the princess as his reward.

It is with the former theme, however, that we are here concerned—with the *Kinder-Wunsch* stories. In all of these (and there are many in many languages) the birth of a child long desired by its parents is due to extra-human powers, the intervention of which is made subject to certain conditions—usually that the child is to be delivered up to the demon or fairy at the expiration of a certain time. Almost always the child gives evidence of his strange origin by his beauty and precocity, and when at last he is apprised of the vow which binds his parents, he succeeds in freeing himself from the dominion of the powers of evil, sometimes by his own cunning and skill, sometimes by the direct assistance of the Virgin. Often through his exceptional cleverness, we find him rising to positions of wealth and eminence.<sup>1</sup> Often, too, the boy's adventures include a sojourn at the demon's home, not necessarily in Hades, often in some enchanted region on or under the earth.<sup>2</sup>

According to Breul, the monkish theorizers of the Middle Ages have made of this story a sort of test case. Always musing over the problem of sin and the possibility of atonement, they saw in Robert, or in his prototype, an example of the extreme measure of depravity, of wickedness both inherited and actual. For such a sinner, they ask, what expiation is possible in this world or the next? The first

<sup>1</sup> Breul, Introduction, pp. 115–117.

<sup>2</sup> Cosquin's *Contes Populaires de Lorraine, Romania*, VII: *Le Fils du Diable*.

part of the story propounds the question, the second part gives the monkish solution.

In its developed form, the legend of *Robert* is certainly French,<sup>1</sup> though the popular tales which lie at its foundation are found among many nations. But *Sir Gowther*, which is, on the one hand, unmistakably a version of *Robert the Devil*, claims, on the other, to be derived from a Breton Lay,<sup>2</sup> and we cannot, without good reason, disregard the author's assertion.

Moreover, when *Sir Gowther* varies from the more familiar versions of *Robert*, it often approaches Celtic tradition.<sup>3</sup> Let us see, then (1), in what particulars this variations occurs and (2) whether *Sir Gowther* in departing from the traditional accounts of *Robert*, comes the nearer to *Tydorel*, which also, as we know, claims a Breton origin :

"Cest conte tient a vrai  
Li Breton qui firent le lai." <sup>4</sup>

(T., ll. 480 and 481.)

1) The orchard scene<sup>5</sup> and the circumstance that the demon, or fairy, is actually the father of the hero, are not found in any other known version of *Robert*. Here *Sir Gowther* corresponds closely with *Tydorel*. In the other versions of *Robert*, the child is the son of the duke and duchess, though his birth is due to supernatural intervention.<sup>6</sup>

2) In *Sir Gowther* the strange suitor is represented as taking the form of the duke, a fact which greatly palliates the guilt of the duchess. This feature is, naturally, absent from other versions, and is not found in *Tydorel*. In the

<sup>1</sup> Breul, Introduction, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Breul's text, ll. 27-30.

<sup>3</sup> Breul, pp. 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> *Lais Inédits, Romania*, VIII, pp. 67-72.

<sup>5</sup> For similar scenes in Celtic literature, cf. *Sir Orfeo*, Kittredge, in *Am. Jour. of Phil.*, vol. VII, pp. 176-202.

<sup>6</sup> For versions of *Robert*, cf. Breul's App., pp. 209-241.

popular tales the disguise is common, but it is not only unnecessary but illogical in *Sir Gowther*.

3) In *Sir Gowther*, as also in *Tydorel*, the husband is unaware of the relations existing between his wife and the stranger. In *Robert the Devil* accounts differ; sometimes both parents are parties to the contract, sometimes the father only, sometimes the mother.<sup>1</sup>

4) The manner in which Robert is brought to repentance differs widely in the different versions.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the change comes from within, sometimes he is converted through the ministrations of a pious hermit. In Etienne de Bourbon, his mother herself opens his eyes to his lost condition. We have called attention to the fact that in *Tydorel* and *Sir Gowther* the hero's suspicions are first aroused by a chance remark of an outsider, quite ignorant of the truth.

But if we would know how far either of our two stories may have been influenced by the other, we must examine not only their points of contact, but their points of divergence.

1) In *Sir Gowther* the discord between husband and wife is strongly emphasized; in *Tydorel* it is not even intimated. We only infer that an heir was ardently desired.

2) In *Sir Gowther* the stranger comes disguised as the husband, but comports himself with brutal violence. In *Tydorel* there is no disguise, but the lover is a model of courtesy.

3) In *Sir Gowther* the stranger reveals his true character at parting, but he goes never to return. In *Tydorel*, the knight conceals his name, but his first visit is one of many, extending over many years.

4) Sir Gowther excels his fellows in strength and activity, but his chief characteristic is unbridled ferocity and prema-

<sup>1</sup> Breul, Introduction, pp. 119-120; we read in the text of *S. G.* that the Devil takes especial pleasure in deceiving women.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Breul's App.



ture perversity. Tydorel is a model of chivalry ; his sleeplessness is his only mark of superhuman origin.

5) At the end<sup>1</sup> Sir Gowther goes to Rome to seek forgiveness, Tydorel rejoins his father in fairyland.

Beside the foregoing differences in detail, there is, of course, a complete contrast between the two works in tone and feeling. *Sir Gowther* is unmistakably a *Christian* story, expressing a real, if crude, religious sentiment. *Tydorel* is frankly pagan and unmoral. Moreover, the traces of *courtoisie*, of the chivalrous ideals in manners and conduct, which we find in *Tydorel*, are completely absent from *Sir Gowther*, where the tone is popular, almost brutal in places. What then may we suppose to be the relation between these two poems, so alike and yet so different in their likeness?

The relative lateness of *Sir Gowther* need not influence us. In its present form it dates from the fifteenth century, but it is composed, as we have seen, of much older material, while *Tydorel* can scarcely be older than the first quarter of the thirteenth century. However, without regard to dates, we may at once reject the idea that *Tydorel* is an imitation of *Sir Gowther*. The legend of *Robert the Devil* had already in the thirteenth century taken on definite form and color, and all consciousness of its composite structure had doubtless been lost. It is highly improbable that a French *jongleur* should have composed a version of the story which not only eliminates all the religious element, but cleaves the legend in twain just at the point where the two parts connect. Such a supposition would attribute too much critical acumen to any poet of this class or age.

But there is no such reason to forbid our supposing that *Tydorel* was one of the sources of *Sir Gowther*. Moreover, the author of *Sir Gowther* claims expressly to have used a

<sup>1</sup> In referring to *Sir Gowther*, I allude only to the first part.

“Lay of Brittany”; and though it is conceivable that the many and striking correspondences between the two works are due to their derivation from a common source, we must in justice first consider the claims of the one *lai breton*, dealing with the same subject, which has come down to us.

Let us assume then, that the author of *Sir Gowther*, having before him some version of *Robert the Devil*, had also the *Lay of Tydorel*. According to the methods of those early romance-writers, who were not hampered by questions of copyright, our poet may very well have thought to heighten the charm of his austere subject-matter by an admixture of the more highly spiced episodes of the Celtic story. Indeed, the resemblances between *Tydorel* and the more popular versions of *Robert*, were of just the sort to catch the eye and charm the fancy of a popular poet—a likeness not of spirit and purpose, but of individual incidents and situations; and,—given the faculty of combination, which was so large a part of the mediæval singer’s endowment,—such a hybrid composition as we have in *Sir Gowther* becomes a natural product.

But the author had not reckoned with all the difficulties of his task. For how can we make it appear plausible that the arch-fiend in person can inspire a romantic passion, such as the queen feels for the stranger knight in *Tydorel*? Hence the clumsy device of the disguise, perhaps already known to the writer in other tales, but which evidently has no place in *Sir Gowther*. But if the fiend wears the form of the husband, what becomes of the wife’s guilt? It dwindles to a mere inarticulate prayer (“she cares not whence it come”), wrung from her by her desperate plight; and this surely does not deserve so terrible a punishment. The circumstances of the wife’s concealment and of her husband’s joyful acceptance of the child as his own, are but necessary results of the orchard episode. If the author of *Sir Gowther* copied the

first, he must have copied the others. Even the device employed to awaken the young man's suspicions, and so bring about the catastrophe, shows signs of imitation, since the peculiar circumstances are reproduced nowhere else.

If this hypothesis be admitted,<sup>1</sup> we shall have to record a curious phenomenon. Here is a popular folk-lore theme entering twice, at different epochs and under different forms, into the structure of the same legendary cycle. For if the motive of the *Kinder-Wunsch* is a component part of *Robert the Devil*, it is none the less certainly one element in the story of *Tydorel*.<sup>2</sup>

A superficial examination of *Tydorel* suffices to convince us of its composite character. We find inexplicable gaps and still more inexplicable repetitions, while certain episodes seem without justification in logic or reason. Why, for example, should the queen, who loves her husband devotedly in the first paragraph, yield so easily to the solicitations of a stranger in the second? Why should her strange suitor warn her so solemnly that if she repels his advances, she will "never more know joy?" After promising to reveal his name and birth, why should the knight only admonish the queen to ask him no more questions? If he proposes to visit the queen habitually, it seems strange that he should think it needful to foretell the events of twenty years on this first occasion. Above all, why should sleeplessness be chosen as *Tydorel's* distinguishing characteristic? Questions like these arise at every step, and in order to answer even a few of them, we shall have to analyze more closely the contents of the poem.

<sup>1</sup> Notice that in both *Tydorel* and *Sir Gowther*, the question put by the hero to his mother, takes the same form: "Who is my father?"

<sup>2</sup> Breul inserts as the immediate source of *Gowther* a hypothetical *Breton* lay. He believes that *Sir Gowther* is a translation of a complete Breton version of the legend, whether written in French or not he does not say. The substitution of *Tydorel* for this unknown lay greatly simplifies the whole problem.

1. In lines 1-15, we are told of the happy married life of the king and queen. Their only sorrow is the absence of an heir. Clearly this is the introduction to the *Kinderrwunsch* motive. Karl Breul's thorough study of this theme makes it unnecessary to dwell upon it here. The keynote of the story, in all its forms, is the contract made by the parents with the Evil One before the birth of the child, in consequence of which the child is subject to the powers of darkness, from whose dominion it is freed finally, either by its own ingenuity, or by the intervention of Providence. Always, whatever the difference in detail, the child is conceived of as under a ban—handicapped from his birth by the sin of his parents.

2. In lines 16-160, we are aware of a complete change of tone, and it is not until we reach line 161 that the familiar note recurs (161-199). Lines 16-160 are devoted to the garden episode with the love passages between the queen and the stranger, which remind us strongly of analogous scenes in Marie's Lays—in *Guigemar*, for example, *Yonec*, and *Lanval*.

3. After a brief resumption of the first theme (lines 161-199, containing the joy of the king over Tydorel's birth), we come to the description of Tydorel, his beauty, charm, and popularity. We find here one striking difference between Marie's *Yonec* and *Tydorel*. For Marie, the important element is the love story; the child is of subordinate interest. *Yonec*, indeed, serves only as the avenger of his parents' death. In *Tydorel*, on the contrary, the child is the main interest; the love story is only preliminary, though it may seem to occupy an undue proportion of space.

4. From line 296 to 475 we resume theme number 1. Here the hero is distinctly under a mysterious ban, separated from his fellows by a characteristic which he recognizes as a curse, and the explanation of which he extorts with violence from his trembling mother. This is surely Robert the Devil.

5. In the conclusion, however, we lose him again, and find, instead, a being oblivious of moral obligation and unconscious of guilt. We have, in short, a resumption of the theme begun in the garden scene, which I shall call the *wonder-child* motive.

The characteristics of this theme are the following :—

1. A supernatural being, fairy or demi-god, falls in love with a mortal woman.

2. By various expedients he gains her love, and the fruit of their union is a son, who is reputed to be of a mortal father, but who really is destined to reproduce, more or less faithfully, the attributes of his supernatural parent.

3. This child is, accordingly, distinguished from his fellows by extraordinary beauty and strength, sometimes by superhuman powers. Usually he has relations with the unseen world, and at death rejoins his father in the land of Faery.

As we shall see later on, there is reason to believe that these two themes (that of the *Kinder-Wunsch* and that of the wonder-child) derive originally from the same source. But in the popular handling of them they are, in general, kept apart, and have received quite different developments. The hero of the former is essentially a being of ill-omen, set apart for an unhappy destiny ; while all the gifts of nature as of fortune are heaped upon the head of the wonder-child. Where shall we look for an explanation of the contrast ?

Christianity is the most exclusive of religions. Officially, at least, the Church can make no compromise with Heathenism. The dwellers in Olympus and in Walhalla, as well as the gods of Celtic mythology, were to the missionaries simply evil spirits, fallen angels who belonged to Satan's kingdom. If sometimes, in dealing with the beliefs and customs of the common people, the priest took a more tolerant attitude, it was yet rather by silence than by actual concession. Lucky indeed was the ancient divinity who was suffered still to hide

his head beneath the green hill, once his peculiar domain ; or in the bed of some lake or stream, across which he had often pushed his boat, bound on adventures of love or war.<sup>1</sup>

What wonder if this change of fortunes brings with it a corresponding change of disposition ?<sup>2</sup> The dethroned gods degenerate. Sometimes they become mere tricky sprites, working good or evil according to their caprice, while again they are represented as actual demons, finding a malicious delight in beguiling and discomfiting unsuspecting mortals.

But the knight in *Tydorel* is neither sprite nor demon ; he is like other men, save for his more than mortal beauty and the mysterious charm that he possesses, which bends the will of others to his. He reminds us, indeed, of the fairy chief Midir, in the Irish story of the *Wooing of Etain*, cited by Mr. Kittredge as an analogue of *Sir Orfeo*. And, if I mistake not, we shall find upon examination that Midir and the father of Tydorel are of one race and one kindred.

In the early Celtic legend, especially that of Ireland,<sup>3</sup> we find not fewer than three notable heroes all of whom bear a striking resemblance to Tydorel in the circumstances of their birth. The most ancient and least known of these is Mongán, the reputed son of Fiachna, but really the son of *Manannan Mac Ler*, god of the sea, one of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, or sons of the Goddess Danu. The god visited Fiachna's queen in the absence of her husband, according to one version taking the form of the king, according to another frankly acknowledging his name and his errand, and in both foretelling the birth and wonderful endowment of the child Mongán. In both stories, also, the wife's submission is made the condition of the husband's life and safety.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage of Bran*, vol. II, pp. 211-213 *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> *Sir Orfeo*, Kittredge, in *Am. Jour. of Phil.*, VII, pp. 195-197.

<sup>3</sup> *Sir Orfeo*, *Am. Jour. of Phil.*, vol. VII.

<sup>4</sup> *Voyage of Bran*, vol. I, pp. 175-208 *et al.* ; *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 1-38 ; *Cycle Mythologique Irlandais*, by D'Arbois de Jubainville, pp. 267-333 *et al.*

The characteristics of Mongán are related at length in the versified portions of *Bran's Voyage*. There we hear that "Fiachna will acknowledge him as his son, that he will delight the company of every faery knoll," and be the "darling of every goodly land." He is to have the power of shape-shifting, the ancient prerogative of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*; he will reign long and "be slain by a son of error, and after death will be borne to the gathering where there is no sorrow." Numerous tales emphasize the relations of Mongán with the *Aes Siddhé*, or folk of the mound; also his power of shape-shifting,<sup>1</sup> and if none of them assert explicitly that the hero returns ultimately to the Land of Promise, this omission is probably due to an early confusion of the wizard Mongán and a historical person of the same name.<sup>2</sup>

I give in substance Mr. Nutt's interesting parallel between Mongán, Arthur, and Find:

1) Find is a South Irish chieftain of the third century of our era, though later notices associate him with West Scotland. He is first referred to in documents of the eighth century. The facts concerning him which interest us in this connection are the following: Find is a posthumous child, reared in the forest, the destined avenger of his father, possessor of magic gifts and powers, and deserted by his wife for his favorite nephew and warrior.

2) Arthur of the great Breton Cycle, whose historical prototype is a *dux bellorum* of the fifth and sixth centuries, is located in southern Scotland and northern England, while the romantic part of his history is associated with South Wales. Arthur owes his birth to shape-shifting on the part of his father, which reminds us of Mongán. Arthur's wife

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage of Bran*, I, App., p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, App., p. 87; also pp. 139-141.

is unfaithful, as is Find's, and like both Find and Mongán, he has relations with the immortals. At his death he passes to Avalon. The Arthur legend was known more or less from the ninth century on, and became widely popular throughout both Great and Little Britain during the twelfth.

3) Mongán, as we recall, is the son of a god, or according to some accounts, a rebirth of Find. By the oldest tradition, his mother is unaware of his supernatural character. "Mongán's boyhood is passed in the land of Faery with his father, he is a magician, who can change his shape at will, he loses and recovers his wife," has dealings with the fairies and, it is to be inferred, passes into fairyland at death. The Mongán legend belongs to northern Ireland, and dates at least from the eighth century, the time at which the versified portions of *Bran's Voyage* were composed.<sup>1</sup>

I quote from Mr. Nutt: "Earlier than, and underlying the heroic legends of Finn, Arthur and Mongán, I assume that among the Celtic-speaking people of these islands, Goedels and Brythons both, there was current the tale of a wonder-child, begotten upon a mortal mother by a supernatural father, reincarnated in him, or transmitting to him supernatural gifts and powers, associated with his father in the rule of that Land of Faery to which he passes after his death. Such a tale would be a natural framework into which to fit the life story of any famous tribal hero. Identification might arise from, or at least be facilitated by, identity or likeness of name, possibly again from likeness of circumstance. Once the identification was established, the legend would be subject to two sets of influence; one purely romantic, derived from, and further developing, the mythic basis; the other, historic or quasi-historic, anxious to accommodate the traditional incidents to the facts of the hero's life."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Voyage of Bran*, vol. II, pp. 27-29.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyage of Bran*, vol. I, p. 28.



In the Mongán legend and in these others which treat of a kindred theme, we have come, I believe, to the kernel, the ultimate source of the wonder-child element in *Tydorel*. Here we find, if not all, at least most of the typical characteristics of this mythical personage. And those points at which *Tydorel* diverges from the more archaic and properly mythical treatment of the theme, may be accounted for as we explain similar variations in the legend of Arthur. They are devices of the annalist or of the *jongleur* either to harmonize the story with the beliefs and conditions of a later age, or, perhaps, to fit it into the life of some historical personage.

The garden episode in *Tydorel*, for example, has many analogues in Celtic story. It agrees strikingly with the Mongán legends, of which it follows sometimes one, sometimes another. For example, the queen's husband, in one Mongán tale, has been called away to Scotland to succor a friend hard pressed in battle. In *Tydorel*, the king is absent on a hunting expedition. Tydorel's mother, like Euridice in *Sir Orfeo*, is reclining under an *Impe*, or grafted tree, in her garden, when she is approached by a stranger whose beauty and dignified mien accord well with the description of the "noble-looking man," who appeared to Fiachna Finn on the battlefield, and visited his wife in the palace.

"Contre val le jardin garda  
Si vit un chevalier venir  
Soef le pas, tut à loisir ;  
Ce fut le plus biaux hon du munt  
De toz iceus qui ore i sont,  
De raineborc estut vestuz,  
Genz ert e granz e bien membruz."

(*Tydorel*, ll. 40-47.)

"As they were conversing, they saw a single, tall warlike man coming towards them. He wore a green cloak of one color, and a brooch of white silver in the cloak over his breast, and a satin shirt next his white skin." In both

stories the birth of the child is foretold and his extraordinary gifts detailed. "A glorious child shall be begotten by me there," says the warrior to Fiachna, "and from thee shall he be named . . . and I shall go in thy shape. . . ." In the other version, he says to the queen: "Thou shalt bear a son. That son shall be famous, he shall be Mongán."<sup>1</sup> In *Tydorel* the knight says:

"De moi avrez un filz molt bel,  
 Sil ferez nomer Tydorel ;  
 Molt ert vailanz e molt ert prouz,  
 De biaute sormontera toz." (ll. 113-120.)

We may reasonably ask, however, why *Tydorel*'s mysterious father should have decreed that he should be sleepless? There was certainly nothing distinctively godlike in this characteristic, for though the gods may be assumed to know no weariness, yet the spirits of evil, too, are known to be especially active during the hours of darkness, when men are at rest and off their guard. Probably only the author himself could satisfy our curiosity on this point. We may, however, suggest that the very equivocal nature of this attribute of sleeplessness was perhaps its chief recommendation.

The author of *Tydorel* is handling, as we know, not one theme, but two, which have but little real resemblance. Somewhere his two motives (that of the *Kinder-Wunsch* and that of the wonder-child) must blend, if he is to succeed in producing even superficial unity of action. A close study of the story will convince us, I think, that our poet has met the difficulty as cleverly as was possible in the circumstances.

In the story of the wish-child, the crisis always comes with the revelation to the hero of the circumstances of his birth. This disclosure is made usually by the parents, and

<sup>1</sup> MS. *Book of Fermoy*, p. 131 a. (D'Arbois de Jubainville, Catalog, p. 206, quoted in *Voyage of Bran*, vol. I; App., p. 44.)

often under compulsion. But in those Celtic myths which we have been examining, the fact of superhuman paternity, so far from being a disgrace, is the highest, most coveted distinction. Yonec<sup>1</sup> shows no sign of shame when told of his real father's name and nature, and we are told of Cuchullin that, when questioned as to his parentage, he ignored his human father and boasted his descent from the god Lug.<sup>2</sup> The author of *Tydorel*, looking for some compromise between opposite traditions, may have bethought himself of the familiar proverb: *Qui ne dort pas n'est pas d'homme*, and have welcomed here a solution to his problem.<sup>3</sup>

Still more was he embarrassed, we may surmise, by his desire to give a tone of *courtoisie* to a legend alien in its spirit to every tenet of chivalry. In the other versions of these stories, there is little or no trace of what we call romantic love. The gods of the Celtic Pantheon are as capricious in their fancies as Jupiter or Odin. They come and they go; and if they ever return, it is only to claim and to carry away with them the son who is to reproduce on earth their divine qualities. As for the woman, she goes back to her mortal husband. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, a loftier, more immaterial, conception of love was felt to be indispensable to every courtly tale of romance. No doubt Marie de France herself, womanly and sentimental, shunning in her stories whatever savored of brutality and barbarism, did much toward setting the new standard of "courteous" love. To Marie, constancy, faithful service of the beloved was the essence of true love—the love which was outside the bounds of law or morals, and which existed for its own sake.

<sup>1</sup> *Yonec*, in Warnke's edition of *Marie de France*.

<sup>2</sup> *Cuchullin Saga*, Elinor Hull, Introduction, p. lvi.

<sup>3</sup> Le Roux de Lincy's collection, I, p. 167: "Il n'est pas homme, Que ne prend somme."

We cannot doubt, I think, that the author of *Tydorel* was familiar with the lays of Marie, and in particular with *Yonec*. In this story, we remember, the queen is visited by a beautiful knight who comes and goes in the form of a bird. Their love continues until they are betrayed, and the knight is slain by the jealous husband. Their son, Yonec, becomes in time the avenger of his father's death, and inherits the mysterious kingdom from which his father had come.

There are certain resemblances in detail between *Tydorel* and *Yonec*<sup>1</sup> which we may note in passing, without insisting too strongly upon their significance, for a similarity in themes may have produced a likeness in the treatment.

When the knight in *Yonec* first appears to the lady, seeing her terror, he reassures her, but does not tell her his name or his race :

Si li segrei vus sont oscur,  
Gardez que sieiez a seur.

(*Yonec*, ll. 125-129.)

Even when pressed, he refuses to be more explicit, except in the matter of his Christian faith. The knight in *Tydorel* observes the same discreet silence. In relating the birth of Yonec, Marie tells us :

“Sis fiz fu nez e bien nurriz,  
E bien gardez e bien chieriz—  
Yonec le firent numer,  
El regne ne pot on trover  
Si bel, si pru ne si vailant  
Si large ne si despendant.”

(*Yonec*, ll. 453-468.)

Of *Tydorel* we hear :

Li termes vint, li filz fu nez,  
E bien norriz, e bien gardez—  
Tydorel le firent numer.

(ll. 175-178.)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also *Tydorel*, ll. 20-26 ; and *Guigemar*, 261 ff.

De Tydorel firent seignur—  
 Onques n'orent il meillur—  
 Tant preu, tant curtois, tant vaillant,  
 Tant larges ne tant despendant. (ll. 220-225.)

But chiefly is the author indebted to Marie for that tone of *courtoisie* which pervades his work, changing what is bald and crude in the old story into the sweetness and the somewhat effeminate grace which Marie had made fashionable.

We have found then in *Tydorel* a *contamination*, or composite structure made up of two elements :

1) The familiar folk-lore motive of the child devoted to the devil.

2) The story of the wonder-child, also familiar to popular mythology.

3) We find, besides these two, a third, pervasive rather than distinct—a sort of infusion of the spirit of chivalry. This we note especially in the romantic ideal of love presented, and we detect in it the influence of Marie de France.

The legend of *Robert the Devil* was already fully developed in the thirteenth century, so there can be no doubt that the story of the wish-child was familiar in Celtic speaking countries, as in others. But we cannot be so certain as to the channels through which the second element in his story came into the hands of the author of *Tydorel*.

The lack of unity in *Tydorel*, as a whole, is doubtless open to severe criticism ; but we must not deny to its author the praise due to the ingenuity and even originality with which he has embroidered and embellished his patchwork background, heightening its color, and so far as possible hiding the seams. The garden episode is narrated with a simple grace and naturalness worthy of Marie ; and the device by which the catastrophe is brought about is really clever, though not in accord with the spirit of the old stories. The episode of the young goldsmith is indeed curious, quite

without a parallel in any version of *Robert*, or in any other popular tale which I have read. I incline to credit it to the author of *Tydorel* as an original invention.<sup>1</sup>

We must remember, too, in judging *Tydorel*, that we have probably not received the work in its original form. There are passages so dissonant with the rest of the poem, and so far inferior to it, that we are sure we have to reckon with a late revisor. The object of these alterations and elaborations was probably to lengthen the story, unusually short in its original shape, and rather terse and concise in style. Perhaps, too, this copyist found it advisable to introduce some novel features, however questionable might be the taste of his interpolations: witness the stupid bit of satire leveled at the king's credulity in accepting *Tydorel* as his son.<sup>2</sup>

Almost certainly this copyist is the author of the queen's confession, where at great length she recounts the whole course of her relations with the stranger—repeating in great detail, and with many useless additions and repetitions, the story told at the beginning of the poem. The prophetic passage in which the knight foretells the birth not only of a son, but of a daughter, is doubtless the work of a *remanieur*. This daughter does not appear elsewhere, but we are informed here that she is to marry a certain count, and from her are to descend a long line of noble knights; and, no doubt with the idea of maintaining the symmetry of the tale, we are told that these knights shall sleep even more than the rest of mankind.<sup>3</sup> Very possibly this passage may have been introduced at a later date to flatter some patron of the poet by giving him a demi-god for an ancestor.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Romania*, VIII, *Lais Inédits*, Introduction to *Tydorel*, p. 67. G. Paris says that this incident is familiar to Celtic and Oriental folk-lore, but I have not identified it elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> *Tydorel*, ll. 165-175.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ll. 344-475.

<sup>4</sup> Notice the attempts at variety and novelty in this passage, and the marked avoidance of rhymes found in the first version: cf. ll. 104-110 with 423-444; 111-120 with 450-454.

But if so large a part of *Tydorel*, as we have it, is foreign to its original form, just what was the aspect of the story as originally written or told? If we remove the clumsy additions of a late and inferior hand, and also those elements which are due to the invention of the author (cf. pp. 20 and 21), we shall have left, obviously, the two folk-lore motives previously analysed, that of the *Kinder-wunsch* and that of the wonder-child. But we have seen that the former has no real place nor fitness in our story, and is only very imperfectly combined with it by the ingenuity of a twelfth or thirteenth century poet. (Cf. pp. 17, 18.)

At last in our process of reduction we reach the heart of our legend, the substance of the Breton lay which, we may suppose, bore the name of *Tydorel*. We may assume that this lay was by one of the later contemporaries of Marie de France, that it was written in French and contained the history of a wonder-child, son of a god and a mortal, who in all likelihood reproduced some of those supernatural powers which we have seen in Mongán, Find, Cuchullin, or Arthur, and who at the close of his earthly career rejoined his father in the realms of Faery.<sup>1</sup>

Turning again to *Sir Gowther*, we recall that we had ascribed to the influence of *Tydorel* some of the elements there found which are wanting in other versions of *Robert the Devil*, notably the circumstance that the fiend is actually

<sup>1</sup> Since we have seen that the author of *Tydorel* (1) was probably a contemporary of Marie, it may be asked why we do not attribute the lay to Marie herself, assuming that whatever features are inconsistent with her style and methods, were the work of the author of *Tydorel* (2).

My reasons for not assigning this work to Marie are the following:

1. *Tydorel* (1), judging from the elements which have survived in *Tydorel* (2), was, I believe, a cruder, less artistic, more primitive production than anything Marie has given us.

2. The romantic element, if not wholly wanting, was quite secondary, and the interest centred in the *mythical*, not in the sentimental motive.

the father of the child. In discussing this feature, Breul says, "Dieser Zug ist ebenfalls uralt. Sowohl Beispiele wo die Frau ihren Verführer kennt, als solche wo sie ihn nicht kennt, bei sonst gleichen Verhältnissen. Wir befinden uns hier auf dem Gebiet der Massenhaften Sagen von den Incuben und Succuben. . . . Ursprünglich sind es mythologische göttliche Wesen, aus deren Verkehr mit irdischen Frauen dann mächtige (oft allerdings gewaltttätige) Männer entspringen." He quotes as the classic example, the verse of Genesis where we are told that the "sons of God" loved the "daughters of men."

He might, I believe, have gone a step further in his deductions; for what, after all, is the story of the child devoted to the Devil before its birth, but a degradation of the much older legend of the wonder-child? It may be incredible, at first sight, that the motive which has culminated in one direction in *Robert the Devil*, can have arisen, at the other extreme, to the conception of Arthur, the Blameless King. But after all, when we remember that Satan was once the highest of the archangels, what transformation can find us unprepared? Dispossessed of their earthly kingdom, banished to river-beds and caverns, the *Tuatha Dé Danann* began their downward course. Still they were gods, though gods in exile, and no mortal was discredited by their addresses. It was left to the Christian missionaries to complete their degradation. They were relegated to the rank of earth-spirits—if not actually devils, yet certainly neither gods nor angels. Moreover, as the new religion obtained stronger hold upon the people, as monkish teaching usurped the place of popular myth, we may well believe that the sanctity of the marriage vow was emphasized, and that the nature of any being who might tempt a woman to break it, came to be regarded as evil, even fiendish.

In some such fashion we may picture the gradual change



in the popular attitude towards the ancient gods. But if, indeed, these supernatural beings were evil and malevolent in character, how admit of love passages between them and mortal women? The very idea was abhorrent! Hence the modifications of the old story. Now the fiend appears in disguise, either to both parents or to one alone; he is no longer the actual father of the child, but the tempter, who so works upon the desires of the parents as to secure for himself the possession of the child.

This gradual transformation of the legend would account for some of the variations in the popular tales treating this theme. In some versions—notably, those at the basis of *Robert the Devil*—the child is already at his birth perverse and depraved beyond the measure of humanity. In others, he is only more beautiful and vigorous than other children.<sup>1</sup> In some stories the child's strength is superhuman, even in its cradle: witness the nine nurses killed by Sir Gowther in his first year. This is a trait common to heroes of all nations,<sup>2</sup> and in particular we are reminded of Cuchullin, for whom no nurse could be found, until one of his own supernatural race volunteered her services.

The question of the fulfilment of the prenatal contract made by the parents with the demon, brings up a curious parallel in the story of Mongán. In all the wish-child stories, the child, at a certain age, is to be delivered up to the demon; the time and circumstances vary in different versions. In some tales, the Devil himself comes and carries off the child at the appointed time.<sup>3</sup> In others, especially in those where we detect clerical influence, the child, struck by the growing sadness of his parents, forces from them an avowal of his origin, and the fate that threatens

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Breul, Introduction, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 122 (citation from Luther's *Table Talks*, p. 300).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cosquin in *Romania*, VII, pp. 223 ff.

him. This is substantially the version we have in *Robert* and in *Tydorel*, but the former seems, on the face of it, a more primitive form. To this class belongs a tale in the Rhetian dialect, called *Miez Maset*. The Devil disguised as a man appears to the mother and asks, as if in jest, for half of what she is carrying. She is carrying an armful of herbs, and in her ignorance accedes to the stranger's request. Some time afterwards her son is born, and on the third day the Devil reappears, this time in his true character, cuts the child in half, and departs carrying with him his share.<sup>1</sup> Again, the boy sets out of his own accord to find the demon, and in one story actually penetrates to Hades and spends some time, not unprofitably, at the Devil's court. But we have not forgotten how on the third day after his birth, Manannan Mac Ler appears and carries off Mongán to the Land of Promise, where he remains until his sixteenth year.

In *Robert the Devil*, as in *Tydorel*, few traces remain of those magical gifts transmitted by the gods to their mortal children. There is the widest variation in this respect in the popular tales. The Rhetian hero, *Miez Maset*, has, besides his physical mutilation, a singular power of control over animals. He has as his especial servant a marvellous trout, which performs all sorts of extraordinary feats, including the final restoration of the lost half of his person. In many versions the youth works wonders of strength and dexterity in fulfilling the conditions of freedom imposed by the Devil; invariably, in the end, he outwits the Evil One at his own game.

We thus see that in the stories of *Robert the Devil* and of *Tydorel*, we are handling very old, originally mythical material, common, it may be, to many nations, but to which we find, in particular, many close analogues in early Celtic

<sup>1</sup> *Romanische Studien*, Vol. II : *Praulas Surselvanas*, by Descurtins, No. 23.

legend. After many modifications and transformations, the myth of the wonder-child enters Christian literature in the form of *Robert the Devil*, and begins a new and fruitful career in the service of the new religion.

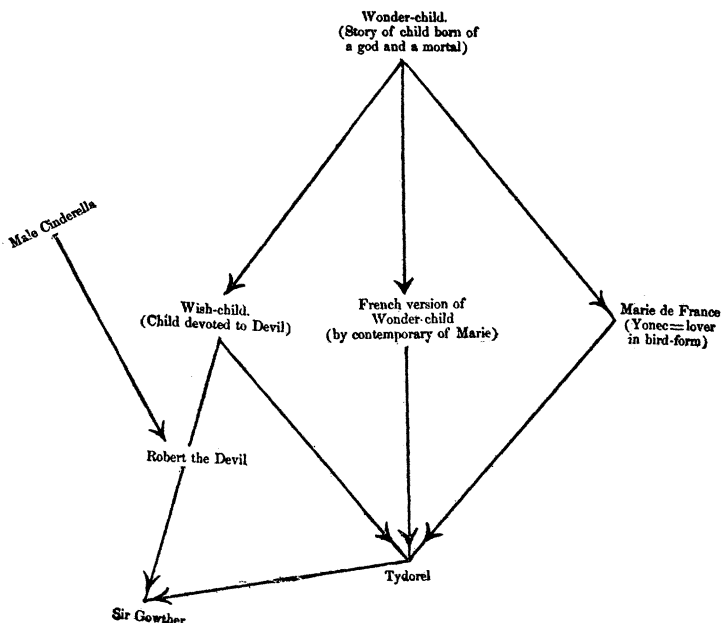
If the ancient stories themselves lived on and have come down to us substantially unchanged, it must be because they—the legends of Mongán and Find, of Arthur and Cuchullin—were early identified with historical characters; and because, too, they entered into a literary form before Christianity had acquired a hold on the faith and the fancy of the Celtic-speaking peoples.

In the *Lay of Tydorel* we have, then, I believe, not only that “lay of Britain” which the English author of *Sir Gowther* “sought” and found, but we have, what is even more interesting, a pale, discolored semblance of the myth in its more primitive form. Here, though no longer a god, the mysterious lover is still a creature of beauty and charm, who bends mortals to his will and holds them in awe lest they pry too curiously into the hidden things he may not reveal. And here, too, we have some traces of the original wonder-child, surpassing other children in strength and grace, and set apart from them by at least one characteristic that marks him as “not of man.”

#### FLORENCE LEFTWICH RAVENEL.

##### ANALYSIS OF TYDOREL.

1. Tydorel (1), about the third quarter of the twelfth century :  
Story of the Wonder-child.
2. Tydorel (2), before 1200 :
  - (a) Wonder-child : ll. 16–130 ; 175–244 ; 475–490.
  - (b) Wish-child : ll. 1–16 ; 160–162 ; 325–358.
  - (c) Episode of the goldsmith : ll. 244–330.
  - (d) The prophetic speech of the stranger knight.
3. Tydorel (3), first quarter of the thirteenth century :  
Elements a, b and c, together with lines 164–175 and the queen’s long speech to Tydorel—in short, the poem in its present form.



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